

Jeffersonville, PA – On Saturday, February 23, Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) spoke at the Montgomery County Black Law Enforcement Officers Association Banquet, which took place at the Westover Country Club in Jeffersonville. — “I am honored to be invited to speak tonight because I strongly believe that African American law enforcement officers are at the front lines of keeping our communities safe. Those here tonight display the exemplary public service and heroism in serving and protecting their neighbors,” said Congressman Sestak. “And I believe we must do more to increase the diversity of our law enforcement professionals because a lack of diversity heightens racial tension and fosters disconnect between police and residents in minority communities.”

Since taking office last January, Congressman Sestak has supported a variety of efforts to increase our support for law enforcement officials and first responders, including police officers. Specifically, he supported the COPS Improvements Act of 2007, a bill that demonstrates his commitment to putting 50,000 new police officers on the beat by authorizing \$6.9 billion between fiscal 2008 and 2013 for the Community Oriented Policing Services program. The COPS Improvements Act will also provide funding for “terrorism cops” as well as add a number of new policing activities, such as those designed to reduce the distribution and abuse of illegal drugs, for which the program could award grants.

Congressman Sestak also increased funding by \$2.1 billion for terrorism prevention, including resources for first responders. The Homeland Security Appropriations Act tightens border security by adding 3,000 new Border Patrol Agents; increases aviation security by providing funding to double the amount of cargo that can be screened; enhances port security by providing \$400 million for safety grants – 90 percent over 2007 – to protect critical port facilities and infrastructure; and contains \$400 million in security grants – more than double 2007 funding – to protect critical transit infrastructure in high-threat areas and increases chemical plant security by including providing that state and local governments can set chemical safety rules that are stronger than the federal government’s.

Furthermore, when the president proposed eliminating the Metropolitan Medical Response System—which provides funding for hospitals and first responder EMS services in major metropolitan areas to enhance their preparedness—Congressman Sestak pushed for increased funding for this program in the Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which provides \$50 million, \$17 million over FY 2007, for the program. The bill also provides \$50 million to continue the Interoperable Communications Grants, which is funded by the Department of Commerce to

help local police, firefighters and emergency responders to talk to each other during a crisis. These two programs are essential to the Philadelphia region, which is constrained by the fact that its ambulance dispatching system does not allow city rescue crews to communicate directly with hospitals.

The lack of communications interoperability is a serious problem, and the grants under this bill can help improve the communication flow among our first responders and thusly improve emergency response.

Finally, Congressman Sestak has been working to provide funding to first responders in the Philadelphia region, including SEPTA, to ensure their communications networks are interoperable.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.